

Chapter 3

DEVOTION AND DYNASTY ON PARCHMENT

IN THE PREVIOUS chapter, I argued that the coin type with the representation of Henry and Matilda should be interpreted as a visual communication of the unity and cooperation between the ducal couple who complemented each other. Stamped onto sheets of silver that were meant to be circulated, Matilda is positioned as co-ruler, who possibly acted as a regent during her husband's absence. Their unity is further highlighted, as this chapter will show, in two undated manuscripts, a psalter and a gospel book, made at the Benedictine monastery at Helmarshausen.¹ One thing that sets manuscripts apart from the coins, seals, and textiles discussed in this study is their complex nature as multiple-page artefacts that come to life by turning the leaves in order to comprehend the book's internal structure and its performative qualities. In the present chapter, however, my focus is on the personalized aspects of the two manuscripts, leaving the larger analysis of the complete volumes to more specialized studies.

In their psalter Henry and Matilda are represented together at the foot of the Crucifixion (Figure 17a).² The gospel book they donated to the Church of St. Blaise contains two portraits: one shows them as donors of the book, while the other portrays the couple as recipients of the crowns of eternal life (Figure 18b and Figure 21).³ The psalter and gospel book connected with Henry and Matilda were personalized books and this partly explains their existence. By way of comparison, no surviving manuscripts can be connected to Matilda's mother Eleanor of Aquitaine, whose status as a patron of French literature and troubadours has been critically assessed in more recent scholarship.⁴ And while there certainly is a case to be made for Matilda's half-sister Marie of Champagne as a literary patron who may have also been involved in her husband's donation of a gospel of John to Saint Loup at Troyes, no contemporary personalized books have survived.⁵ Apart from the "booklet" (*quaterno*) in which the names of Alfonso

¹ For Helmarshausen see Ingrid Baumgärtner, ed., *Helmarshausen: Buchkultur und Goldschmiedekunst im Hochmittelalter* (Kassel: Euregioverlag, 2003).

² Psalter, London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 381, 11 fols. (fragment), 21 × 13 cm. The book is digitized www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7892&CollID15&NStart=381.

³ Gospel book, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2°, 226 fols., 34 × 25.5 cm. The book is partly digitized, <http://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=105-noviss-2f&hi=Cod.%20Guelf.%20105%20Noviss.%202%CB%9A>.

⁴ Karen M. Broadhurst, "Henry II and Aliénor of Aquitaine. Patrons of Literature in French?," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 27 (1997): 53–84; and Ruth Harvey, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Troubadours," in *The World of Eleanor of Aquitaine: Literature and Society in Southern France between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Marcus Bull and Catherine Léglu (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 101–14.

⁵ For Marie of Champagne's literary patronage, see John F. Benton, "The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center," *Speculum* 36 (1961): 551–91. For the donation by Henry the Liberal, see Evergates, *Henry the Liberal*, 101.



Figure 17a–b. Psalter of Henry and Matilda, Helmarshausen, 1170s. London, The British Library, Lansdowne MS 381, article 1, fols. 10v and 11r. Photo: © The British Library Board.



Figure 17a-b. (continued)

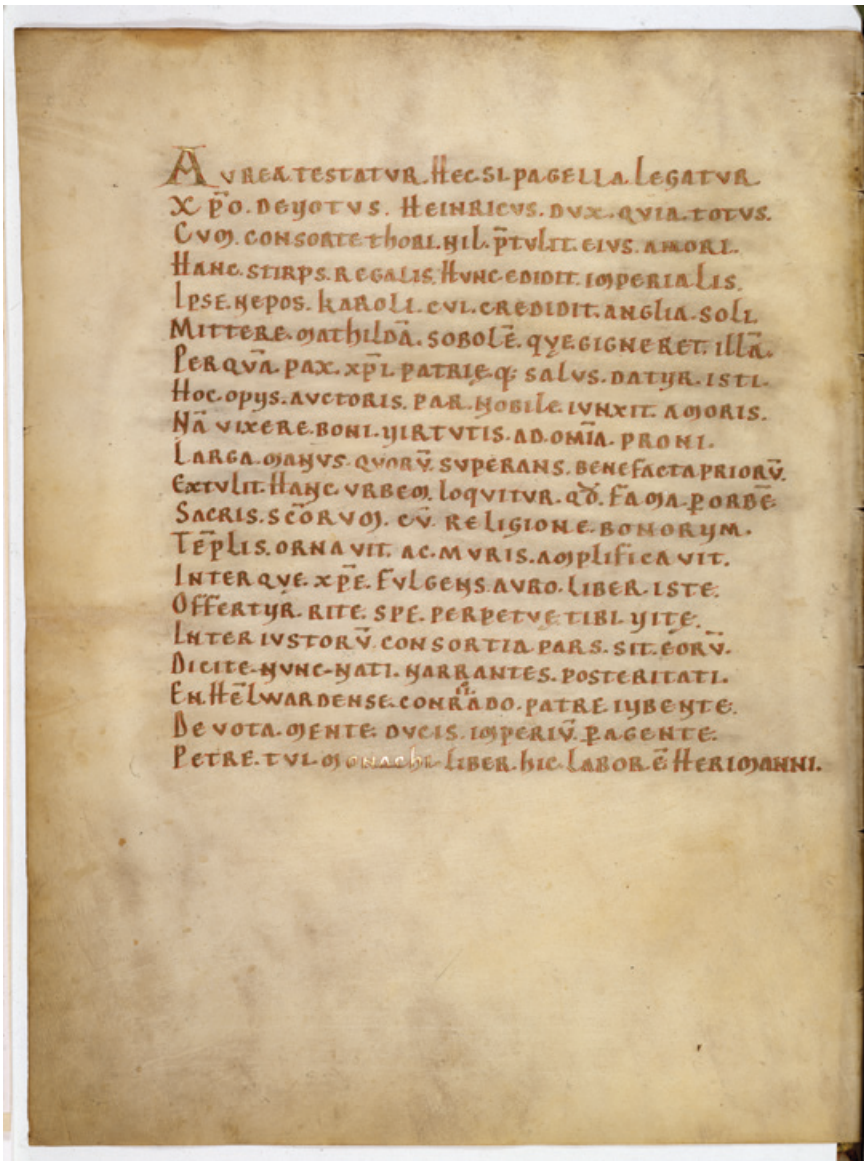


Figure 18a–b. Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, 1172–1176. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2^o, fols. 4v and 19r.
 Photo: Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

Figure 18a-b. (*continued*)



Figure 18c. Detail of Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda.

VIII's creditors are mentioned and that the king bequeathed to Leonor in his testament from December 1204, nothing is known about the books the queen owned and read, or donated to favoured religious institutions such as Las Huelgas.⁶ Equally, no surviving manuscripts can be connected to Joanna, nor is any listed in her testament. Their grandmother Empress Matilda, however, donated books from her personal chapel to the abbey of Bec-Hellouin on her deathbed in 1167, confirming that manuscripts were owned and gifted by women.⁷ On German soil, nothing is known about books owned or gifted by Clementia, Henry the Lion's first wife. But we do know that Duchess Judith of Flanders (d. 1095), who married Henry the Lion's great-grandfather, Welf I of Bavaria, bestowed several book on Weingarten Abbey, again showing that elite women possessed books, as

6 "Item, pacteat cunctis quod ego teneor persolvere creditoribus meis, nominatim illis quorum nomina scripta sunt in quaterno meo, cuius exemplar tenet domina regina." González, *El reino de Castilla*, 3:344, no. 769.

7 "Item libri capellae imperatricis." A. A. Porée, *Histoire de l'abbaye du Bec*, 2 vols. (Evreux: Impr. de C. Hérisssey, 1901), 1:651.

is well known from surviving manuscripts related to women or references in charters and chronicles.⁸ And of course, Leonor's and Joanna's books could have been so generic that even had they survived, they would not be recognized as once having belonged to women.

For Henry and Matilda's psalter, it was the inclusion of their portraits that made it unique, because in all other ways it was a typical twelfth-century psalm book. By contrast, their gospel book, although a common liturgical volume, stands out because of the dual coronation and dedication miniatures: no similar books from the twelfth century have come down to us. Since it is impossible to establish whether Henry and Matilda individually commissioned the books or did so together, a narrow question of patronage is not a useful category of analysis here. Rather, I address the psalter and gospel book as the result of mutual cooperation between husband and wife in terms of both use and gifting. To what extent the ducal couple was involved in the visual and intellectual design of the manuscripts is hard to ascertain, but the representations of the ducal couple and the dedication text in the gospel book suggest their familiarity with the abbot and his monks at Helmarshausen, where the books were made. This is unsurprising, given that Henry the Lion held advocacy over Helmarshausen Abbey until 1180, when Frederick Barbarossa forced him to give it up; until then the duke must have maintained regular contact with Abbot Conrad.

Important for the appreciation of the gospel book are the two miniatures in which the ducal couple appears, as well as the dedication poem that lauds them. These have stimulated extensive debates about Henry's—but not Matilda's—motives for ordering and donating the liturgical manuscript: was it a pious gift through which he tried to gain the crowns of eternal life for himself and his dynasty?⁹ Or was the ever ambitious duke aiming for a royal crown in the here and now, seeking to communicate his claim by virtue of his imperial heritage and his wife's royal ancestry?¹⁰ Depending on the point of view, an early dating around 1172 or a later dating of ca. 1188 have been promoted.¹¹ Those arguing for a late date have also adduced the gospel book's style, along with the 1188

⁸ Dockray-Miller, *The Books and the Life of Judith of Flanders*. For numerous references to literature on women and books, see the introduction in Julie A. Somers, "Women and the Written Word: Textual Culture in Court and Convent during the Twelfth-Century Renaissance" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2018).

⁹ Gerhard Oexle, "Memoria und Memorialbild," in *Memoria. Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens*, ed. Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (Munich: Fink, 1984), 384–440.

¹⁰ Johannes Fried, "Königsgedanken Heinrichs des Löwen," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 55 (1973): 312–51.

¹¹ For an early dating, see Johannes Fried, "'Das goldglänzende Buch': Heinrich der Löwe, sein Evangelium, sein Selbstverständnis: Bemerkungen zu einer Neuerscheinung," *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 242 (1990): 34–79; Eckhard Freise, "Adelsstiftung, Reichsabtei, Bischofskloster, Konvent der Kalligraphen, Künstler und Fälscher: Zur Geschichte der Äbte und Mönche von Helmarshausen (997–1196)," in *Helmarshausen*, 9–44; and Peter Rück, "Die Schriften," in *Das Evangelium Heinrichs des Löwen. Kommentar zum Faksimile*, ed. Dietrich Kötzsche (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989), 122–54 esp. 123.

dedication of the altar of the Virgin in the Church of St. Blaise, for which this gospel book may have been made.¹² A complicating factor is that the majority of manuscripts made in Helmarshausen, like the psalter and gospel book, are not securely dated, making it difficult to establish a firm chronology.¹³ Moreover, the connection between the altar of the Virgin and the gospel book is not undisputed. The debate may never be resolved satisfactorily, which led Bernd Schneidmüller to suggest a general date range between 1168, when Henry and Matilda married, and 1189, when Matilda died.¹⁴ Yet a more narrow range of dates for the manuscript does indeed matter. Because the written documentation related to Henry and Matilda does not provide direct information concerning the book's dating, the possible motive(s) behind its creation can only be understood if we take the illuminations into account. In my reading, the ducal couple's donation was made in supplication for the birth of an heir or out of gratitude that their prayers for a son had been answered.¹⁵ A gift connected to pregnancy or childbirth was by no means unusual. To offer just one example, Henry the Liberal, count of Champagne, who married Matilda's half-sister Marie, presented a gospel of John "in commemoration of his [Henry the younger's] birth, for which the book was given to the same Saint Loup" at Troyes.¹⁶ My analysis of Henry and Matilda's gospel book, therefore, led to its dating between 1172, when Matilda was pregnant for the first time, and 1176, when their first son was born.

Books were so much more than material items accommodating devotion, liturgy, knowledge, and entertainment. They had the potential to flaunt status and rank or to reflect dynastic anxieties; they could guide moral behaviour or serve as gifts to cement ties between donors and recipients, both lay and clerical.¹⁷ Seen in this light,

12 Ulrich Victor, "Das Widmungsgedicht im Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen und sein Verfasser," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 114 (1985): 302–29; Reiner Hausscherr, "Zur Datierung des Helmarshausener Evangeliers Heinrichs des Löwen," *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 34 (1980): 3–15; Frank Neidhart Steigerwald, *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen: Sein Bilderzyklus und seine Bestimmung für den Marienaltar des Braunschweiger Domes im Jahre 1188* (Offenbach: Burckhardtthaus-Laetare, 1985); Ursula Nilgen, "Theologisches Konzept und Bildorganisation im Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 52 (1989): 301–33 at 322; and Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die Memoria Heinrichs des Löwen," in *Memoria in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*, ed. Dieter Geuenich and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 128–79 at 128–29.

13 The only dated Helmarshausen manuscript is a gospel book made in 1194; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 65 Helmst.

14 Bernd Schneidmüller, "Kronen im goldglänzenden Buch: Mittelalterliche Welfenbilder und das Helmarshausener Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen und Mathildes," in *Helmarshausen: Buchkultur und Goldschmiedekunst im Hochmittelalter*, ed. Ingrid Baumgärtner (Kassel: Euregioverlag, 2003), 123–46 at 135. This general date range is also favoured by Hartmut Hoffmann, *Bücher und Urkunden aus Helmarshausen und Corvey* (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1992), 45.

15 Jitske Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire: The Twelfth-Century Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda," *Studies in Iconography* 39 (2018): 135–66.

16 Evergates, *Henry the Liberal*, 101.

17 For manuscripts connected to dynastic issues, see John B. Freed, "Artistic and Literary Representations of Family Consciousness," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past. Ritual, Memory,*

manuscripts—especially illuminated ones—were part of their owner’s performance of power. This chapter asks how Matilda’s and Henry’s psalter and gospel book reflected and aided in the fabrication of their identities and how this helped to stage their power.¹⁸ Scholars have addressed the concept of self-representation in these manuscripts, but they have done so mostly by focusing on Henry the Lion rather than recognizing the joint role played by the ducal couple. This imbalance has been exacerbated by the tendency to foreground the importance of the magnificent gospel book (34 × 25.5 cm), while largely ignoring the smaller psalter (21 × 13 cm).¹⁹

Spiritual Self-Empowerment: Following in the Footsteps of the Three Marys

At some point the psalter was taken apart; now only eleven folia are left. The lavishly decorated and complete calendar in deep purple and gold is embellished with zodiac images and representations of the labours of the months (fol. 1v–7r). The calendar lists English and French saints (for example, St. Alban on March 22, the Venerable Bede on May 27 instead of May 26, St. Sévère on July 20, and St. Audomarus on September 10 instead of September 9), as well as Modoaldus, the patron saint of Helmarshausen. The Anglo-Norman elements that were added to this locally produced book indicate that it was tailored to the needs and interests of Matilda, who must have been an important user of the book.²⁰ The absence of St. Thomas Becket (d. 1170), who was canonized in February 1173 and whose feast day was celebrated on December 29, is noticeable. His importance to the ducal family is evidenced by his presence in their gospel book. It therefore seems safe to assume that the psalter must have been manufactured before Becket’s canonization in 1173 and after Henry and Matilda’s marriage in 1168. After the

Historiography, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 233–52; Elizabeth L’Estrange, *Holy Motherhood: Gender, Dynasty and Visual Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Claire Richter Sherman, “The Queen in Charles V’s Coronation Book: Jeanne de Bourbon and the *Ordo ad reginam benedicendam*,” *Viator* 8 (1977): 255–98. For books as moral guides, see Madeline H. Caviness, “Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a Vade Mecum for Her Marriage Bed,” *Speculum* 68 (1993): 133–62; Hans Hubert Anton, *Fürstenspiegel des frühen und hohen Mittelalters* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006). For book as gifts to secular people, see Dockray-Miller, *The Books and Life of Judith of Flanders*, 77; Brygida Kürbis, “Die Epistola Mathildis Sueva an Mieszko II. in neuer Sicht,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 23 (1989): 318–43.

18 Henry and Matilda also commissioned a Middle High German version of the *Chanson de Roland*. For an analysis of this text from a gendered perspective, see Jasperse, “Women, Courtly Display,” 125–41.

19 Harald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, “Buchkultur im geistlichen Beziehungsnetz. Das Helmarshausener Skriptorium im Hochmittelalter,” in *Helmarshausen*, ed. Baumgärtner, 2003, 88–92; and Elisabeth Klemm, “Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen,” in *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Kommentar zum Faksimile*, ed. Dietrich Kötzsche (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989), 42–76 at 72–73.

20 Klemm, “Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen,” 72.

calendar follow two full-page miniatures with scenes from the New Testament (fol. 7v and 8r), Psalm 1, to which a Gloria is added (fol. 8v–9v), and Psalm 2 (fol. 9v). The texts of Psalms 3 to 99 are missing, but Psalm 100 has been preserved (fol. 10r). On the verso of this psalm (fol. 10v), a full-page miniature is devoted to the Crucifixion, with the ducal couple represented at the foot of the Cross; it is paired on the facing page with another full-page miniature, the Holy Women at Christ's tomb (fol. 11r) (Figure 17a–b). The first line from Psalm 101 (*Domine exaudi orationem meam et clamor meus ad te veniat*) is written on the verso side (11v) of what is now the last page of the manuscript.²¹ The subsequent text from that psalm and other psalms are lost, just as the canticles and litany that in all likelihood would have been included in the complete volume.²²

Although a relatively small book, it is too big to be held with just one hand. A close look reveals that this devotional book qualifies as a deluxe manuscript. Purple-red paint lavished with gold was used for the calendar and the opening of Psalms 1 and 101 (and originally also Psalm 51, following the tripartite division in the decoration of psalters). The carefully executed and brightly coloured full-page miniatures as well as the symmetrical layout of the illustrations and texts emphasize its sumptuous character. In addition, the parchment is of even quality—not thin but rather stiff—without any insect holes or repair stitches. Throughout the surviving pages, the width of the margins, with visible tiny holes used for ruling, remains the same. The wide lower and outer margins show that more parchment than strictly necessary was used. Henry and Matilda commissioned a splendid book for their own devotion and were willing to spend money on it. Patronage and ownership of books are not straightforward evidence of literacy and we do not know whether Henry and Matilda were able to read Latin, but that would not have stopped them from utilizing a prayer book.

The sumptuous nature of the materials already tells us something about the ducal couple in terms of piety and wealth, but more insights can be gained from the miniature in which they are depicted. Leafing through their psalter, or before starting to recite Psalm 101 in which the Lord is asked to hear King David's prayer, Henry and Matilda would encounter themselves humbly kneeling at the foot of the crucified Christ. His cross is not a wooden one, but striped with grey, white, green, and red to give it a three-dimensional appearance; onto the top, the sign "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews" is affixed.²³ The cross dominates the miniature, standing out against the gold background.

21 "Hear, O Lord, my prayer: and let my cry come to thee." All the translations in this chapter are taken from the Douay-Rheims Bible on vulgate.org.

22 Canticles and litany are present in another psalter made in Helmarshausen, second half of the twelfth century, 11.5 × 6.5 cm, 126 fols., now kept at Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.10, partly digitized, www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W10/description.html. For the medieval psalter, see Nigel Morgan and Paul Binski, "Private Devotion: Humility and Splendour," in *The Cambridge Illuminations: Ten Centuries of Book Production in the Medieval West*, ed. Paul Binski and Stella Panayotova (London: Brepols, 2005), 163–69 at 164.

23 "iesus nazarenus rex iudeorum" (John 19:19), as is the case in two other Helmarshausen manuscripts: Hersfeld Gradual and Sacramentary (Kassel, Universitätsbibliothek, Landesbibl and Murhardse Bibl der Stadt Kassel, 2° MS Theol. 58, fol. 59r) and the Gospel Book of Henry the Lion and Matilda discussed below.

Christ's arms and legs are somewhat bent, and the nails in his feet and the wound in his right side are clearly visible. His bearded head, eyes closed, sags onto his chest. The suffering of Christ cannot escape the viewer, especially with the grief displayed in the upper corners by the figures of the sun and moon, who cover their weeping eyes with their mantles. Rather than showing their sorrow, the figures of the Virgin Mary and the apostle John, to whom Christ gave into each other's keeping as mother and son, are represented as eyewitnesses.²⁴ In this respect the psalter differs from the gospel book, where Mary and John exhibit deep grief.²⁵

This cross iconography was by no means original and can be found in two other manuscripts produced at Helmarshausen. In a psalter, for example, which has been connected with women in the circle of Henry the Lion, Christ is represented hanging on a red cross, flanked by Mary and John as well as the sun and the moon (Figure 19).²⁶ And in the gradual-sacramentary of Hersfeld, even though the representations of Mary and John have been cut out, the sun and moon witness the dead Christ on a rainbow-coloured cross.²⁷ What renders the miniature in Henry and Matilda's psalter unique is the representation of the ducal couple, identified through the now barely legible inscriptions *Heinricu[s] dux* and *Mathilt ducissa* in the red border above their heads. Located within an arched setting, the bearded Henry is depicted on Christ's right—the privileged side—and the veiled Matilda is on his left. Both are represented from the waist up, and their faces are shown in three-quarters pose as their gazes try to reach both Christ and the viewer, engaging as it were with their own selves while reading this psalter. Their *bliouts*, blue and white, are decorated with golden borders and partly covered by their brightly coloured mantles. Henry's red mantle has slipped from his shoulder, perhaps meant to signify his humility. Neither ruler wears a crown in this scene of prayer. Of the preserved leaves, it is this one that shows the most wear, a strong indication that this particular page was frequently seen and touched. Taking in the images, reciting the prayers, and turning the pages were sensorial experiences that contributed to devotion through the arousal of emotions and the stimulation of contemplation, inviting the viewer to revisit specific pages.

Surviving twelfth-century psalters rarely contain representations of their donors or recipients; when these are included, they are usually not part of the narrative cycle.²⁸ Henry

²⁴ John 19:26–27.

²⁵ Gospel book, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2°, fol. 170v. Also, Ecclesia and Synagoga are present in the gospel book, but absent in the psalter.

²⁶ Psalter, Helmarshausen, second half of the twelfth century, 11.5 × 6.5 cm, 126 fols., fol. 41v. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.10. The depicted woman has been identified as Matilda, Richenza (Henry the Lion's first wife), or Gertrud (Henry the Lion's daughter from his marriage with Richenza), Klemm, "Helmshausen und das Evangeliar," 69.

²⁷ Kassel, Landesbibl., 2° MS Theol. 58, fol. 59r. See Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, "Buchkultur," 101 and fig. 12. On the facing page, fol. 58v, a small donor figure is represented, but the other scenes have been cut out. See Klemm, "Helmshausen und das Evangeliar," 69 with images.

²⁸ Frank Olaf Büttner, "Der illuminierte Psalter im Westen," in *The Illuminated Psalter: Studies in the Content, Purpose and Placements of Its Images*, ed. Frank Olaf Büttner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 1–106 and 459–79 at 76–78.

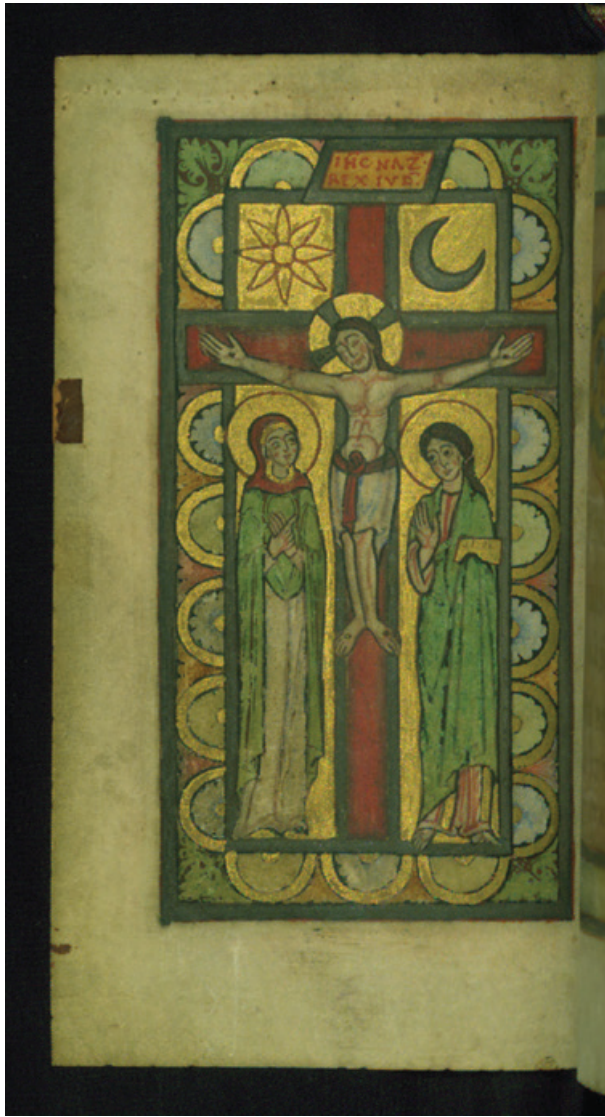


Figure 19. Crucifixion, psalter, Helmarshausen, second half of the twelfth century. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.10, fol. 41v. Creative Commons Licence.

and Matilda, however, are more than just present at the Crucifixion; they are incorporated into the visual New Testament narrative, starting with the Annunciation and ending with the Three Holy Women at the sepulchre signalling Christ's Resurrection. Their banderols draw them further into the story. The duke holds a text scroll declaring "we pray to you Christ and bless you," while the duchess's scroll implores "save us Christ by virtue of the cross."²⁹

²⁹ "Adoramus te Christe et benedicimus tibi / Salva nos Christe per virtutem crucis."

These texts belong to the office of the *Inventio crucis*, the Finding of the Cross by Empress Helena, celebrated every year on May 3.³⁰ In imitation of Constantine and Helena, the ducal couple not only contemplates the death of Christ on the cross in order to save mankind but is also part of the Cross's afterlife. The Finding of the Cross, as well as the Exaltation of the Cross commemorated on September 14, are included in this psalter's calendar, as well as in the abovementioned psalter also made at Helmarshausen. Widespread feasts by the twelfth century, these general entries may equally reflect personal meaning for the ducal couple, related to Henry's travels to the Holy Land.

Several sources inform us that Henry the Lion journeyed to Jerusalem in 1172–1173, among them the chronicles by Arnold of Lübeck (ca. 1210) and by John Kinnamos (ca. 1180), as well as a charter issued in Jerusalem itself for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1172.³¹ According to Arnold, Henry donated huge sums of cash to the Holy Sepulchre, and he also had the basilica decorated with mosaics and its portals covered with pure silver. In addition he arranged for annual payments to buy wax candles that should burn perpetually at Christ's tomb.³² Even though the candles are replaced by lamps, Arnold's narration tallies with the surviving charter in which Henry,

for the forgiveness of all my sins and those of my wife duchess Matilda, noble daughter of the king of the English, and also for the children God gave me in all his mercy, and for all of my family, established and arranged to erect in the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord three lamps eternally burning in honour of God. Of these lamps, one is to burn for the renowned sepulchre of the Lord [*domini sepulcro*], the other at the place of Calvary [*calvarie loco*] for the passion of the Lord, the third for the life-giving wood of the Holy Cross.³³

30 Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 6.

31 Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica*, 22; and John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. Charles M. Brand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 214. For Henry's journey and how it has been interpreted, see E. Joranson, "The Palestine Pilgrimage of Henry the Lion," 146–225 (devotional journey); Johannes Fried, "Jerusalemfahrt und Kulturimport. Offene Fragen zum Kreuzzug Heinrichs des Löwen," in *Der Welfenschatz und sein Umkreis*, ed. Joachim Ehlers and Dietrich Kötzsche (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 111–37 (Arnold turned a crusade into a pilgrimage in order to praise Henry's piety); Volker Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde. Identität und Fremdheit in den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau und Arnolds von Lübeck* (Berlin: Akademie, 2002), esp. 292–309 (disagrees with Fried about the idea of a crusade); and Joachim Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe. Eine Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2008), 199–211 (Henry was to fight the infidels and to negotiate with Sultan Kilic Arslan II).

32 "Optulit autem dux ad sanctum sepulcrum pecuniam multam, et basilicam in que lignum Domini repositum est ornavit musivo opera et ostia eiusdem basilice vestivit argento purissimo. Deputavit etiam redditus annuos ad cereos comparandos iugiter ad sanctum sepulcrum arsuos." Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica*, 22.

33 "pro remissione omnium peccatorum meorum et inclite uxoris mee ducisse Matildis, magnifici Anglorum regis filie, et eorum, quos deus misericordie sue dono michi dedit, heredum nec non et totius generis mei tres lampades perpetuo ad honorem dei ardentis in dominice resurrectionis

To Henry, Christ's death, his entombment signifying his Resurrection, and the Finding of the Cross on which he was crucified were all connected. Each event had a place in the sacral landscape of the church precinct: the Holy Sepulchre in the centre under the western dome, in the east Calvary where Christ was crucified, and further east the place where his cross was found.³⁴

A similar landscape was evoked in the psalter, where Henry and Matilda not only witnessed Christ's Crucifixion, but were part of his Resurrection together with the Three Marys at the tomb.³⁵ All four Gospels mention women at Christ's grave, and although their number and identification vary Mary Magdalen is always among them; in Western art three women are usually depicted visiting his sepulchre on Sunday, Easter morning.³⁶ In the ducal couple's psalter, the woman in the front holds out a censer filled with myrrh and the woman in the back carries a jar of spices to anoint the body.³⁷ Perhaps the representation of incense and spices would have evoked these scents for the viewers, adding to Henry and Matilda's sense of being present at the tomb. Such an experience may even have held special meaning to Matilda if we take into account that in the central Middle Ages several churchmen associated elite women with Mary Magdalen, who presented a gift at Christ's tomb. Pope Gregory wrote to Agnes of Poitou, wife of Emperor Henry III, "for just as they came to the Lord's tomb with a marvellous zeal and charity before all his disciples, so you in devout love have visited the church of Christ, placed at its is in the sepulchre of affliction, before many—no! Before all, the princes of the earth."³⁸ And Hildebert of Lavardin, bishop of Le Mans, thanked Queen Matilda of England (d. 1118) for her gift of a candelabra, with which she imitated "as far as possible the holy women who first came to the cross with tears and then to the tomb with spices."³⁹

ecclesia locari constitui et ordinavi, quarum lampadum una coram glorioso domini sepulcro ardeat, altera vero in calvarie loco ante dominicam passionem, tertia autem coram vivifico sancte crucis ligno constituatur." MGH DD HL, 143–45, no. 94; and Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 206.

34 For a short history of the building, see Lynn Jones, "The Church of the Holy Sepulchre," *Oxford Bibliographies in Medieval Studies*. DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780195396584-0044.

35 A relic of Mary Magdalen was housed at St. Blaise; see Renate Kroos, "Die Bilder," in *Das Evangeliar*, ed. Kötzsche, 164–243 at 229; and W. A. Neumann, *Der Reliquienschatz des Hauses Braunschweig-Lüneburg* (Vienna: Holder, 1891), 140.

36 Matthew 28:1 (Mary Magdalen and the other Mary); Mark 15:40 (Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome); Luke 24:10 (Mary Magdalen, Joanna, and Mary of James); John 20:1 (Mary Magdalen).

37 Luke 23:53–56 and 24:1–3.

38 Fiona Griffiths, "'Like the Sisters of Aaron': Medieval Religious Women as Makers and Donors of Liturgical Textiles," in *Female Vita Religiosa between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, ed. Gert Melville and Anne Müller (Berlin: Lit, 2011), 343–74 at 344n6.

39 Cited in Joan Ferante, "A Letter from Hildebert, bishop of Lavardin (c.1100–18)," *Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/416.html>. See also Griffiths, "'Like the Sisters of Aaron,'" 344.

Arriving at Jesus's sepulchre, the holy women find that the slab has been pushed aside and his loincloth left behind. An angel tells them not to be afraid and that Christ has resurrected, as can be read on his scroll: *resurrexit d[omi]n[u]s*.⁴⁰ In the upper left corner a crowned figure, perhaps David, proffers a text taken from Psalm 67 referring to the Ascension (*ascendit super occasum*).⁴¹ Neither the figure, who may be another king, nor the text scroll in the upper right corner can now be identified, due to the poor state of conservation in this area of the miniature. The nimbed man in the lower left corner is Jacob, who holds a scroll with the words "who shall rouse him" (*quis suscitabit eum*).⁴² It is difficult to make out what is written on the scroll in the right corner, but the words "the third day he will rise" (*die tertia suscitabit*), taken from the Prophet Hosea, seem fitting.⁴³ Taken together, the text scrolls create an ingenious typology of passages from the Old Testament that prefigure the event of Christ's Resurrection. As we shall see, this same Christological thinking appears in Henry and Matilda's gospel book and points to the intellectual climate at Helmarshausen.⁴⁴ Whether or not the ducal couple could grasp the exact meaning of the texts scrolls is not a question we can answer. Yet even basic biblical knowledge would have been sufficient to understand that all the passages relate to the scene that is at the core of this page: the empty tomb that stands in for the risen Christ.

As they touched this page and witnessed this event, Henry and Matilda followed in the footsteps of the first ever pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre. Their spiritual re-enactment was supported by the addition of elements alluding to the Holy Sepulchre as it was known in the twelfth century: the tomb is placed below a dome from which a lamp is suspended. This same representation also features in their gospel book, in contrast to another gospel book made at Helmarshausen in which the tomb is not shown as part of the contemporary twelfth-century architectural space of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.⁴⁵ In both the gospel

⁴⁰ Mark 16:5–6; Luke 24:6. The text in the psalter differs from the gospel book, where on fol. 74v it reads "resurrexit.non.est.hoc."

⁴¹ Psalm 67:5. "Cantate Deo psalmum dicite nomini ejus iter facite ei qui ascendit super occasum. Dominus nomen illi exsultate in conspectu ejus. Turbabuntur a facie ejus" (Sing ye to God, sing a psalm to his name, make a way for him who ascendeth upon the west: the Lord is his name. Rejoice ye before him: but the wicked shall be troubled at his presence).

⁴² Genesis 49:9. "Catulus leonis iuda: ad praedam, fili mi, ascendisti: requiescens accubuisti ut leo, et quasi leaena: quis suscitabit eum" (Juda is a lion's whelp: to the prey, my son, thou art gone up: resting thou hast couched as a lion, and as a lioness, who shall rouse him?).

⁴³ Osee 6:3. "Vivificabit nos post duos dies in die tertia suscitabit nos" (He will revive us after two days: on the third day he will raise us up).

⁴⁴ Kroos, "Die Bilder," 164–65.

⁴⁵ Gospel book, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2°, fol. 74v; gospel book, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 65 Helmst., fol. 12v (no architectural design, no city scape referring to the Holy Sepulchre). For analysis of Mary Magdalen in the gospel book of Henry and Matilda, see Elizabeth Monroe, "Mary Magdalene as a Model of Devotion, Penitence, and Authority in the Gospels of Henry the Lion," in *Mary Magdalene in Medieval Culture: Conflicted Roles*, ed. Peter V. Loewen and Robin Waugh (Routledge: New York, 2014), 99–115.

book and psalter the more realistic representation of the Holy Sepulchre seems to have been chosen deliberately. An interesting connection can be drawn to the similar design on a lead seal pertaining to the canons of the Holy Sepulchre, which is appended to the charter the duke brought back from Jerusalem.⁴⁶ The reverse of the canon's lead seal provided Henry with a lasting impression of the Holy Sepulchre (Figure 20). Inscribed with SANCTISSIMI SEPVLCHRI encircling the representation of the church, Christ's tomb is pierced by three oculi that allow the visitor visual access to the holy burial place. Near—or perhaps on—the tomb two candles are visible, and the site is enclosed by an aedicule from which a lamp is suspended. It is not necessary to imagine that the seal itself served as a model for the miniatures in the ducal couple's books. However, the elements of dome and lamp as explicit references to the tomb of Christ, as it was known in the twelfth century, probably deepened their spiritual participation, especially in light of the duke's donation of candles and lamps. It is even conceivable that they requested this iconography, sparked by Henry's personal experience of Jerusalem.

The couple's veneration of the cross fits the larger context of relics brought to Brunswick and for which the duke had shrines made.⁴⁷ In 1173 Henry donated a reliquary cross to the Church of the Holy Cross in Hildesheim, and a piece of the Cross was given to the Abbey of Reading after he and his wife went into exile in England in 1182.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Wolfenbüttel, Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv, 1 Urk 4. www.arcinsys.niedersachsen.de/arcinsys/detailAction?detailid=v5529613. See Claus Peter Hasse, "Urkunde Heinrichs des Löwen, Herzog von Bayern und Sachsen, für das Heilige Grab in Jerusalem mit Bullen der Kanoniker der Grabeskirche, des Patriarchen Amalrich von Jerusalem (1158–1180) und des Königs Amalrich I. von Jerusalem (1162–1173)," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 1: cat. D 84.

⁴⁷ "Qui [Manuel I] multum letatus est reditu eius, et cum honestissime detinisset eum per aliquot dies, dedit ei quattuordecim mulos, oneratos auro et argento et sericis vestibus. Dux vera immensas gratias agens, noluit accipere, dicens ad eum: 'Habeo plurima, doinne mi, inveniam tantum gratiam in oculis tuis.' Cumque nimis cogeret eum, et ille nulla ratione consentiret accipere, dedit sanctorum reliquias ei multas et preciosas, quas postulaverat. Addidit etiam multam lapidum preciosorum gloriam, et ita valedicto dux in omni pace discessit et venit in Niceam." Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica*, 18. "Manuel gently urged him to stay for another couple of days, presenting him with fourteen mules loaded with gold, silver, and silken garments. The duke thanked him greatly, but refused the gift by saying: 'My lord, I have much if I only find favor in your eyes.' Since the emperor kept urging the duke no less than the duke kept refusing the gifts offered, Manuel finally gave him many of the saintly relics he had requested earlier. He also added much glory of precious stones. Thus released, the duke departed in peace and went on to Nis." This translation is taken from Holger Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 283–314 at 285.

⁴⁸ For Hildesheim, "quod pro salute et remedio anime nostre et uxoris nostre ac liberorum nostrorum nec non omnium heredum vel propinquorum nostrorum, quos preterita, presens vel future pariet generatio, ecclesie sancte crucis in civitate vestra Hidensemensi de ipsa dominici ligni substantia crucem quondam contulimus provido nostre discretionis consilio statuentes" (so that for salvation and remedy, for our spirit, and for that of our wife, and that of our children, and also of all of our heirs or even our relatives—of the past, or present, or of a future generation—we brought the cross, formerly of the same substance of the wood of the Lord, deciding with our provident sense of discretion, at the holy church of the cross, in your city of Hildesheim). MGH DD HL, 145–46,



Figure 20. Lead seal of the canons of the Holy Sepulchre appended to an act issued by Henry the Lion. Wolfenbüttel, Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, 1 Urk. 4.
Photo: Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, Wolfenbüttel.

Yet it is equally imaginable that the design of both miniatures had been made well before Henry embarked for the Holy Land. The monks at Helmarshausen were undoubtedly familiar with the Holy Sepulchre. On the hill called Krukenberg, not far from their abbey, the Church (or Chapel) of St. John the Baptist had been modelled after the Anastasis Rotunda.⁴⁹ The building was commissioned by Henry of Werl (d. 1127), bishop of Paderborn, and was subsidized by money he had originally collected for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.⁵⁰ Possibly inspired by this church built within eyesight and living in an environment imbued with a pilgrimage spirit, the maker of the psalter represented the ducal couple present at the Crucifixion to atone for their sins, but only their prayers will allow them to hope for participation in the Resurrection.⁵¹ In the psalter, Christ's Resurrection, as represented by the empty sepulchre, was witnessed by the Three Marys. The sites of the Crucifixion and Resurrection would have activated the ducal couple, who perhaps sought to identify themselves with Constantine and Helena, to follow in the footsteps of Christ and Mary Magdalen.

Liturgical Display of Self: Matilda Empowering the Dynasty

By contrast with their personal psalter, the gospel book commissioned by the ducal couple was not meant to be used by them but by the priest at St. Blaise in Brunswick when Mass was performed. The book's excellent condition, showing no signs of wear and tear, indicates that it was probably used during principal feast days only. The manuscript itself contains no written clues as to how and when it was utilized, but it might also have been displayed during other important rituals, such as the swearing of oaths.⁵² The dedication miniature

no. 95. For Reading, see Ron Baxter, *The Royal Abbey of Reading* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), 58–59: “de linga domini crux que fuit de capella ducis saxonie” (of the wood the Lord a cross which came from the chapel of the duke of Saxony). See also Thomas Stangier, “Sogennantes Imervard-Kreuz,” in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 1:D 23.

49 Mario Müller, “Modell der Kirche (Kapelle?) St. Johannes Baptist bei Helmarshausen,” in *Für Königtum und Himmelreich. 1000 Jahre Bischof Meinwerk von Paderborn* (Katalog zur Jubiläumsausstellung im Museum in der Kaiserpfalz und im Erzbischöflichen Diözesanmuseum Paderborn 2009/2010), ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Martin Kroker (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2009), 534–35.

50 It was not the only model the bishop had made. In the Externsteine (a sandstone rock formation) at Detmold the chamber of the Holy Sepulchre was carved out in a huge rock formation.

51 A Crucifixion witnessed by an abbot and monk was originally part of Sacramentary made in Helmarshausen, ca. 1170 or later (Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst—und Kulturgeschichte Münster). Yet this book is a liturgical rather than a private manuscript. Also, the abbot and monk cannot be identified as individuals, they do not hold text scrolls that intensify their relationship with Christ and are not represented as part of an architectural construction. Barbara Klössel, “Einzelblatt aus einer Serie von vier Miniaturen eines Sakramentars,” in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 1:cat. G 77.

52 For the use of gospel books in legal contexts, see Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 243–44; Eyal Poleg, *Approaching the Bible in Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 59–107.

and poem as well as the so-called coronation page (Figure 18a–b) leave no doubt that the ducal couple's presence within the gospel book mattered, if not in the performance of Mass.⁵³ The donation of this luxury ritual object demonstrates that Henry and Matilda specifically sought the support of the clerical community. At the same time, its lavish decorations and abundant use of gold, silver, and purple showcases that the ducal couple translated their status to parchment.

With the gift of a liturgical book in which they had themselves represented, the spouses followed an imperial pattern, as is testified to by the pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde (ca. 1007–1012) and the gospel book of Henry III and Agnes (ca. 1043–1046).⁵⁴ We can only speculate whether Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Henry the Lion's cousin, also had himself depicted in the liturgical manuscripts he commissioned, as none has been preserved.⁵⁵ Although not unique in its textual content, the gospel book of Henry and Matilda is still a remarkable surviving specimen. Given Henry the Lion's imperial descent, which as we will see is emphasized in the gospel book, it is likely that the duke and his wife were aware of the imperial precedents. And although Helmarshausen does not appear to have produced manuscripts for the emperor; its intellectual and artistic milieu suggest that Abbot Conrad, who on the orders of Duke Henry had the book made, must have known the practice.

In its present state the gospel book opens with the “capitula sancti evangelii secundum Mattheum” followed by the dedication poem, while the dedication miniature is placed many pages later (Figure 18a).⁵⁶ Elizabeth Klemm has suggested that the poem may have originally faced the dedication miniature, allowing the complementary text and image to be viewed together.⁵⁷ The poem reads in full:

⁵³ Klemm and Kroos provide an overview of the painted content of the gospel book; see Klemm, “Aufbau und Schmuck der Handschrift,” 77–95; and Kroos, “Die Bilder,” 164–243.

⁵⁴ Horst Fuhrmann and Florentine Mutherich, *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen und das mittelalterliche Herrscherbild* (Munich: Prestel, 1986); and Klemm, “Heinrich der Löwe und Helmarshausen,” 77. The pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde, Munich, Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4452, fols. 1v (text) and 2r (miniature); presented to the Church of Peter and Paul, Bamberg, ca. 1007–1012; The gospel book of Henry III and Agnes, El Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Vitr. 17, fols. 3r (Virgin blessing Henry and Agnes) and 3v–4r (text); presented to Speyer Cathedral in 1043–1046.

⁵⁵ Klemm, “Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar,” 43.

⁵⁶ For an overview of the different texts contained in the gospel book, see Böhne, “Die Schriften,” 96–121. For German translations and interpretations of the poem see Victor, “Das Widmungsgedicht,” 302–19; and Paul Gerhard Schmidt, “Das Widmungsgedicht im Herimann Evangeliar,” in *Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Bericht über ein wissenschaftliches Symposium in Braunschweig und Helmarshausen vom 9. Oktober bis 11. Oktober 1985*, ed. Martin Gosebruch and Frank N. Steigerwald (Göttingen: Goltze, 1992), 155.

⁵⁷ Klemm, “Aufbau und Schmuck der Handschrift,” 78; and Schmidt, “Das Widmungsgedicht,” 203–8 at 203. The book may have been reworked in the sixteenth century when its binding was changed; see Otto Mazal and Lorenz Seelig, “Der Einband,” in *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Kommentar zum Faksimile*, ed. Dietrich Kötzsche (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989), 288–306.

- 1 Aurea testatur hec si pagella legatur,
Christo devotus Heinricus dux quia totus
Cum consorte thori nil pretulit eius amori.
Hanc stirps regalis hunc edidit imperialis.
- 5 Ipse nepos Karoli cui credidit Anglia soli
Mittere Mathildam sobolem que gigneret illam,
Per quam pax Christi patrie que salus datur isti.
Hoc opus auctoris par nobile iunxit amoris
Nam vixere boni virtutis ad omnia proni,
- 10 Larga manus quorum superans benefacta priorum
Extulit hanc urbem loquitur quod fama per orbem,
Sacris sanctorum cum religione bonorum,
Templis ornavit ac muris amplificavit.
Inter que Christe fulgens auro liber iste
- 15 Offertur rite spe perpetue tibi vite.
Inter iustorum consortia pars sit eorum.
Dicite nunc nati narrantes posteritati.
En, Helmwardense Conrado patre iubente,
Devote mente ducis imperium per agente,
- 20 Petre tui monachi liber hic labor est Herimanni

This golden page testifies to the reader that / Christ is loved by the devout Duke Henry and his consort, above all other things. / From kings she descends, he from emperors. He stems from Charlemagne, only to him did England / send Matilda, who would bear him offspring, / through Christ's peace and the salvation of the fatherland. / The author's work united the loving couple, / for they lived an exemplary life and always did good, / their generosity surpassed the deeds of their predecessors, / they exalted this city, proclaiming its fame around the globe, / with relics of saints, with the devotion of the good people furnished churches and enlarged walls. / One of these deeds is this gold-gleaming book, / offered solemnly to you, Christ, in the hope of eternal life. / May they be received in the ranks of the righteous. / Announce, you living children, to posterity. / At the command of Abbot Conrad (II) of Helmarshausen, / who faithfully fulfilled the duke's wishes, / here, [Saint] Peter,⁵⁸ is this book, a work by your monk Herimann.⁵⁹

In the opening line the golden page announces that its very existence acts as a witness, showing the reader that the ducal couple is dedicated to Christ. Matilda is first and foremost referred to as the wife of Duke Henry (*consorte thori*); in this case *thori* (bed) indicates that the couple shared the conjugal bed when the text was written. Moreover, the use of *thori* underscores that this was the only place where legitimate offspring could

58 The monk Herimann was able to bring his work to completion with the help of St. Peter, the oldest patron saint of Helmarshausen; see Freise, "Adelsstiftung, Reichsabtei," 12, 15.

59 The English translation is mine. I would like to thank Eduardo Fernández Guerrero for his help with the Latin text and its translation.

be conceived. The phrase emphasizes Matilda's duties as spouse and as consort: she is considered a participant in Henry's rule, and—as the dedicatory text states later—she partakes as his equal in the display of generosity.⁶⁰ We are dealing here with a unique feature: when compared to the laudatory texts in the pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde and the gospel book of Henry III and Agnes, Matilda's role in the poem is significantly greater than that of either Cunigunde or Agnes.⁶¹

Herimann made sure to highlight the couple's ancestry. Matilda is mentioned first, stemming from kings, and then Henry's imperial lineage is stressed. This made him a suitable candidate to receive a princess as his bride, despite his rank as nobility rather than royalty. The spouses are praised as a perfect match, mutually enhancing each other's status. As Henry's *consorte thori*, Matilda, daughter of kings, was assigned the task of producing offspring, as expressed by the phrase *Mathildam, sobolem quae gigneret illam* (line 6). This line has led to considerable discussion because the term *sobolem* (offspring) may refer to one child or perhaps all of the children, while the phrase as a whole has been interpreted in two different ways: either that Matilda had already given birth to a child, or that she was expected to do so.⁶² The first reading supports the idea that the poem was added after Matilda and/or Henry had died and their heirs ruled the duchy, whereas the second reading assumes the poem was written when the manuscript was made. The text's emphasis on children underscores their absence from the dynastic portrait, to be discussed later, which is one of the reasons why it is more likely that the gospel book was created long before the couple's death.

The gospel book's poem proclaims that Henry and Matilda's child (or children) will bring Christ's peace and prosperity to the land. Although "this fatherland" (*patriae isti*) can be interpreted several ways, its connection to the city of Brunswick (*urbs*), which was located within Henry's patrimony, suggests that the word *patria* was chosen to emphasize the Saxon foundation of Henry's power.⁶³ This land was the centre of Guelph territory; as the dynasty's power base, both land with its built environment and power needed to be preserved by future generations. Although not named specifically, Brunswick is quite clearly "the city" to which the poem refers, as it was Henry and Matilda's most important residence. It is also where the Church of St. Blaise, which would receive the book, was rebuilt by Henry and Matilda from 1173 onwards, and according to the poem (line 11), it was this town that proclaimed the ducal couple's fame around the world.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Fama und Memoria Heinrichs des Löwen: Kunst im Kontext der Sozialgeschichte. Mit einem Ausblick auf die Gegenwart," in *Der Welfenschatz und sein Umkreis*, ed. Joachim Ehlers and Dietrich Kötzsche (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1998), 1–25 at 11.

⁶¹ For an analysis of these texts, see Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire," 144–46.

⁶² The first option (Matilda has given birth) is favored by Schmidt, "Das Widmungsgedicht," 158; and by Victor, "Das Widmungsgedicht," 312–13. The future tense is preferred by Freise, "Adelsstiftung, Reichsabtei," 38–39, who interprets it as a dependent clause in the subjunctive mood expressing a wish.

⁶³ Oexle, "Fama und Memoria," 10.

⁶⁴ Cord Meckseper, "Die Goslarer Königspfalz als Herausforderung für Heinrich den Löwen?," *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit*, 2:239 (residence) and 241 (church).

Henry and Matilda were responsible for the building of churches, the donation of relics, and the construction of the city's walls, with the latter occurring somewhere between 1165 and 1181 according to the chronicle of Albert of Stade (1240–1256). The chronicle also mentions the casting of a bronze lion during that time.⁶⁵ If the gospel book's dedicatory poem can be relied on, Matilda was involved in all these activities, including the construction of the city walls. Although her dower agreements do not survive, it is likely that this daughter of affluent parents would have had the money to support such an enterprise, as we know that other high-ranking women did.⁶⁶

Coming full circle, the poem, beginning with a reference to just the page it was written on, ends with the "gold-gleaming book, offered solemnly to you, Christ, in the hope of eternal life" (line 15). This book was an expression of the couple's piety, nobility, and good deeds. It was meant to commemorate them as well as to communicate their wish to be awarded eternal life. The *auro liber fulgens* is depicted in the dedication page, manifesting the connected nature of the pages that were paired originally (Figure 18a–b). Henry and Matilda, together with St. Blaise and St. Aegidius, are identified by a gold inscription in the red zone above their heads. Henry presents the book to St. Blaise, who is depicted as a bishop. The book is completely covered in gold and decorated with a cross embellished with what is probably meant to resemble a large stone in its centre, while the four quarters are filled with X-shaped crosses (Figure 18c). This self-representational image must be understood as a miniature version of the actual gospel book, whose original cover has been lost. Surviving examples demonstrate that golden covers were employed in the twelfth century, some of them even made at Helmarshausen.⁶⁷ Although rudimentary in design, the miniature book calls to mind the golden cover of the gospel book Emperor Henry II donated to the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul at Bamberg.⁶⁸

Matilda does not touch the book. Her hand is grasped by St. Aegidius, who is portrayed as a tonsured cleric wearing priestly vestments, while the duchess, as Renate Kroos proposed, holds a charter from which three cords with seals are appended.⁶⁹ The

⁶⁵ Albert of Stade, *Annales Stadenses*, 345; and Schmidt, "Das Widmungsgedicht," 206.

⁶⁶ Queen Constanza (d. 1093), wife of Alfonso VI of León-Castille (r. 1065–1109), built a palace and an accompanying palatine chapel at the royal Leonese monastery of Sahagún, as well as baths and a mill. And her granddaughter, the Infanta Sancha (d. 1159), constructed a bridge over the River Bernesga in León; see Therese Martin, *Queen as King: Politics and Architectural Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 73–74, 169. And Landgravine Judith of Thuringia (d. 1191) had the castle at Weissensee erected, which resulted in a complaint by Count Frederick of Beichlingen, who perceived the castle (*castrum*) as a threat; see *Cronicon Reinhardsbrunnensis a. 530–1338*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS 30.1 (Hanover, Hahn, 1896), 538.

⁶⁷ For gold book covers, see Frauke Steenbock, *Der kirchliche Prachteinband im frühen Mittelalter: Von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Gotik* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1965), esp. 25–36. For Helmarshausen, see Ursula Mende, "Goldschmiedekunst in Helmarshausen," in *Helmarshausen*, ed. Baumgärtner, 163–98 esp. 177–80.

⁶⁸ Gospel Book of Emperor Henry II, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4454#Einband. See https://einbaende.digitale-sammlungen.de/Prachteinbaende/Clm_4454_Einband_Hauptaufnahme.

⁶⁹ Kroos, "Die Bilder," 185.

gift of the manuscript could have gone hand-in-hand with a donation or confirmation of grants. The charter in Matilda's hand mirrors the book held in Henry's, thus confirming that the donation of the gospel book was a mutual offering. The presentation of the book takes place against a background that recalls an expensive red silk cloth decorated with golden scrolls, animals, and pearly borders. This sense of luxury is further elevated by the colourful and richly ornamented Byzantinizing outfits worn by the donors and saints.⁷⁰ Overall, the visual effect is one of splendour and richness. There is a detail that deserves special mention here: Matilda is wearing a decorated golden crown, whereas Henry is bare-headed. Matilda's crown can therefore only be read as signifying her high-born status, because as the dedicatory text states, "From kings she descends." True, the same poem lauds Henry as the heir of emperors, but by the time the gospel book was made his grandfather Emperor Lothar (d. 1137) had long been deceased, while Matilda's father was still very much alive.

That St. Blaise accompanies the ducal couple is to be expected: although the collegiate church in Brunswick was dedicated to several saints, Blaise was considered one of the most important. Aegidius, on the other hand, was chosen for his reputation as a saint who was addressed by those—both men and women—in need of an heir. This saint served to construct and confirm Matilda's identity as a future mother, a theme we have already encountered in the dedicatory text.⁷¹ The Church of St. Blaise was Henry and Matilda's personal church, built within the Burg complex. Attached to the living quarters by an upper walkway, the couple entered the church via the north transept gallery. This would have provided a clear view of the choir for Henry and Matilda in relative proximity to space usually prohibited to lay people, and it also allowed them to be seen by the people below. Their gospel book would have been used in processions and been placed on the altar, creating an active connection to its donors when they were bodily present and an evocation of the ducal couple when they were away.

In the donation scene, the upward-pointing gestures of both saints and the direction of Henry's and Matilda's glance together suggest that someone beyond their immediate reach may be regarded as the receivers of the gold-covered book: the heavenly Virgin in her guise as God-bearer (*Theotokos*), with her infant son. Mary, dressed in a white tunic covered by a purple robe, is seated on a Byzantine-style backless throne. The gold crown and the cylindrical object (a pomegranate or small container?) surmounted by a lily represent her privileged position as the mother of the king whose teachings and sacrifice would lead Christians to eternal life.⁷² Her raised and open right hand indicates that she acts as an intercessor in Heaven, symbolized by the mandorla that surrounds her. In a framed roundel (*imago clipeata*), her son is depicted as a bust of the young Christ resting on her breast. Christ's right hand is lifted in speech, while in his left he holds the

70 The textile patterns, dress style, and regalia are also connected to Byzantium; see Olaf B. Rader, "Kreuze und Kronen. Zum Byzantinischen Einfluß im 'Krönungsbild' des Evangeliiars Heinrichs des Löwen," in *Heinrich der Löwe. Herrschaft und Repräsentation*, ed. Johannes Fried and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2013), 199–238.

71 Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire," 147–49.

72 Steigerwald, *Das Evangeliar*, 23.

Book of Life, which contains the names of those who lived according to the Gospel and who would therefore be able to enter God's kingdom. This is expressed by the bande-role that drapes down from the Virgin's arm and across her lap to end above the head of St. Aegidius: "Enter the kingdom of life with my help" (*ad regnum vite me subveniente venite*), reminding the ducal couple and other persons who had access to the manuscript that they could turn to the Virgin and her Child for support. In visual terms, the scroll balances the book presented by Henry and serves as a way of linking Matilda's side to the holy writ. What is more, an additional bond between Matilda and the Mother and Child is established by the scroll, as it touches the framing device just at the M of her name.

When read together, dedication text and donation miniature reveal a clear sense of ducal self-awareness to which piety, ancestry, and largesse were essential. These characteristics defined them as belonging to the highest elite. Their secular identities are expressed in a liturgical manuscript, linking the ducal couple's worldly existence with the heavenly realm.

In the gospel book, the celestial sphere is not only embodied by the Virgin and Child, who summon the ducal couple to enter the kingdom of life, but also by Christ who calls Henry, Matilda and their ancestors to take up the cross and follow him.⁷³ Christ is represented in the so-called coronation miniature on fol. 171v; together with a *Maiestas Dei* on the facing page, the coronation scene concludes the painted cycle (Figure 21). Here Henry and Matilda respectfully receive the crowns of eternal life under the gaze of their parents and grandparents.⁷⁴ For the present study, my focus is on the lower zone of the miniature where the ducal couple and their ancestors are depicted, although the significance of the full scene cannot be completely grasped without taking into account the upper zone, both Christ's call to follow him, and the mediation of the saints, including the recently canonized Thomas Becket, whose presence clearly conveys Plantagenet sentiments.⁷⁵

The striking red inscription against a white background above Matilda's head ("Duchess Matilda daughter of the king of the English") ties her at once to her husband and to her father.⁷⁶ Like Henry, Matilda is splendidly adorned, with a richly decorated mantle underscoring her status as a princess. Her royal lineage is emphasized in other ways as well. She is portrayed as standing, making her taller than her kneeling husband, thereby counterbalancing Henry's privileged position at Christ's right side while also indicating that the royal princess was equally important from both divine and dynastic perspectives. Matilda's importance is accentuated by the crown that is conferred on her, which actually touches her head while Henry's crown hovers just above, suggesting that her royal status was considered crucial to Duke Henry because it enhanced his own prestige.⁷⁷

⁷³ The idea of the earthly gift and heavenly reward is acknowledged by scholars studying the gospel book. See, for example, Kroos, "Die Bilder," 182.

⁷⁴ Hermann Jakobs, "Dynastische Verheißung. Die Krönung Heinrichs des Löwen und Mathildes im Helmarshausener Evangeliar," in *Kultur und Konflikt*, ed. Jan Assmann and Dietrich Harth (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 215–58; and Rader, "Kreuze und Kronen," 218–19.

⁷⁵ Thomas Becket's presence is discussed in Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire."

⁷⁶ "ducissa. matilda regis filia."

⁷⁷ The crown on Matilda's head has also been interpreted as a sign that Matilda had passed away when the gospel book was made; see Kroos, "Die Bilder," 133.



Figure 21. Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, 1172–1176. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2°, fol. 171v.
Photo: Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

Matilda's superiority is further underscored by the crowning hands of God: they appear to be crossed, so that he bestows the crown on Matilda with his right hand, counterbalancing her less privileged position to the left of the deity.⁷⁸

This gesture mirrors the equilibrium in the miniature's overall composition, in which parallel attention is paid to the ancestors of both Henry and Matilda, who stand behind them at the coronation. They can be identified as Henry's maternal grandparents Empress Richenza (d. 1141) and Emperor Lothar (d. 1137), the duke's parents Duchess Gertrud (d. 1143) and Duke Henry the Proud (d. 1137), along with Matilda's father King Henry II (d. 1189) and her paternal grandmother Queen Matilda (d. 1167).⁷⁹ The last was a crucial figure in this family portrait because it was only through her descent from King Henry I that her own son Henry II had been able to claim the English throne. The choice to title the elder Matilda *regina* rather than *imperatrix* may seem remarkable since most of her charters style her "empress," but for her seal she used *Romanorum regina*.⁸⁰ In the gospel book, the use of "queen" seems designed to underscore the royal ancestry of her namesake and granddaughter. Finally, next to Queen Matilda stands a figure who has been identified as either Eleanor of Aquitaine or Richenza, Henry and Matilda's eldest daughter.⁸¹ The absence of a crown on the figure's head and simpler dress make it unlikely that Eleanor is depicted here. And while it is possible that Richenza would be included if we accept that the manuscript was made around 1172—when she was born—the absence of an inscription above her head makes a solid identification impossible. I therefore prefer to regard her (or him) as anonymous. This does not alter the message of these dynastic portraits, namely that Matilda, as a royal daughter, was a prestigious partner for Henry, while also demonstrating that the duke was a worthy partner for a princess because of his imperial descent. The presence of parents and grandparents renders visible the otherwise unrepresented offspring mentioned in the dedicatory text. The absence of children, who were crucial to the preservation of the Guelph dynasty, is one reason for reading the making and donation of the gospel book as a response to pregnancy and childbirth.⁸²

The inclusion of parents and grandparents does not solely refer to blood ties and social memory, but also demonstrates, through the golden crosses they hold, that both families have responded to Christ's words written on his scroll in the upper register: "If

⁷⁸ For this gesture, see Jakobs, "Dynastische Verheißung," 227 with references to earlier literature.

⁷⁹ "imperatrix richen'ze. / imperator lotharivs / dvcissa gertrvdis / dux .heinricvs. / dux .heinricvs. / dvcissa . mathilda regis anglici . filia . henrici . regina mathilda."

⁸⁰ Marjorie Chibnall, "The Charters of the Empress Matilda," in *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy*, ed. George Garnett and John Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 276–98 at 277. Perhaps Matilda was labelled *regina* because Richenza was styled *imperatrix*, thus paralleling within the Anglo-Norman realm the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire.

⁸¹ For the identification of this figure as Eleanor, see Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 97; Ana Rodríguez, *La estirpe de Leonor de Aquitania: mujeres y poder en los siglos XII–XIII* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2014), 210–12. For an identification as Richenza, see Freise, "Adelsstiftung, Reichsabtei," 39.

⁸² Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire."

any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”⁸³ The text scroll held by Christ, related to both the saints and the living mortals depicted, was read during the feasts of the martyrs.⁸⁴ A closer look at the crosses held by the ducal couple and their ancestors reveals that they are not identical.⁸⁵ Lothar and Gertrud carry plain golden ones decorated with red borders, while Henry the Proud holds a cross adorned with pearl motifs. King Henry II’s and his mother’s crosses are furnished with a stone in its centre, which is also visible on the cross Henry the Lion has in his hand. Matilda’s cross is somewhat smaller, and its pearled ornamentation resembles that of Henry the Proud. The representation of the divinely ordained right to rule affirmed that the duke and duchess were good Christians, beloved by Christ, who were—like their ancestors—willing to take the cross and follow him in order to receive the crowns of eternal life.⁸⁶

In the coronation scene, we thus find a small but carefully composed genealogy of selected ancestors with favoured saints above. The grouping emphasizes Henry’s descent through his mother and Matilda’s lineage through her father, while tying the two branches together in the persons of the ducal couple. The gospel book clearly is more than a pious donation in which Matilda was involved: her presence next to her husband was pregnant with political meaning. Family and lineage were not only integral to shaping a person’s identity, but also important when claiming territories, obtaining privileges, and forming alliances. Within this visual message, progeny was a crucial element for the maintenance of the family’s possessions, wealth, and prestige. Images such as this can be read in relation to the past, because they demonstrate ancestry, and the esteem and property claims that came with it, but they also have a prospective function in that they proclaim future property rights and marriage options.⁸⁷ The coronation scene makes explicit the dynastic character of the gospel book as a whole, appropriate for the context of public liturgical display by the canons of St. Blaise who pertained to the ducal house.

Made in the same workshop for the same benefactors, the personalized psalter and gospel book with their lavish use of gold and purple communicated status, generosity, and imperial grandeur. Indeed, a first step in the self-fashioning of the ducal couple was to commission these luxury manuscripts around 1172/1173. They reflect how

83 “Qui vult venire post me abneget semet ipsum et tollat crucem suam [et] sequatur me”; cf. Matthew 16:24 and Luke 9:23.

84 Kroos, “Die Bilder,” 230.

85 See also Rader, “Kreuze und Kronen,” 205–17.

86 The coronation theme is underscored by the figures depicted in the corners. In the upper corners Sponsus and Sponsa speak of being adorned with crowns: see Song of Solomon 4:8 and Isaiah 61:10. In the lower corners, Paul and Zechariah also refer to coronation, with the former stating that the crown of righteousness shall be given on Judgement Day, see 2 Timothy 4:8 and Zechariah 3:5. For the crowns, see also Rader, “Kreuze und Kronen,” 217–23.

87 Otto Gerhard Oexle, “Zur Kritik neuer Forschungen über das Evangelium Heinrichs des Löwen,” *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 245 (1993): 70–109 at 104; and Oexle, “Fama and Memoria,” 8–14.

the English princess and the grandson of an emperor wished to present themselves. At the same time, the books commissioned by Henry and Matilda must be understood as manifestations of their religious beliefs. If the psalter was meant to support the personal devotion of the ducal couple and perhaps served as a piece of crusade memorabilia in an age where taking the cross occupied many men and women, the gospel book allowed them to stage their identities in a more public way through the express involvement of the religious community at St. Blaise. The donation of a deluxe manuscript was not merely a ritual confirming the political bond between the ducal couple and the chapter, but even more an act designed to elicit a favourable response from the church's canons. As spiritual guards of the dynasty, the clerics were supposed to treasure its past and look out for its future through the performance of Masses for the souls of Henry, Matilda, and their family. To this end, their lineages and largesse were emphasized in word and image. The explicit inclusion of Matilda as wife of the duke and mother of his offspring, as well as Matilda as royal daughter, highlights her crucial role in the communication and preservation of fame and memory. Above all, it was as wife and mother that the duchess empowered the Guelph dynasty.